

AN APPLE OF DISCORD.

By MARTHA MCULLOCH WILLIAMS

[Copyright, 1997, by the Author.] Billy Sanders found it in the road. Peleg Mayne stole it. In the end Farmer Bloxham's pig ate it up. And, besides all that, it set the whole town bumming -Townland, I had better say. Though the houses were in plain sight of each other, each had its sufficient fields about it. The Sanders place, where Billy lived with his mother, was at the westernmost edge, where the read came in from the market town, a dozen miles away. Peleg was Billy's nearest neighbor and dearest enemy. There had been a chronic fend between the two ever since they were sent to school in their first roundabouts. As for the Bloxham pig, it had a nose against any and every man, to say nothing of women and children, whose gardens and flower plots it devastated as impartially as death.

Such a big, bright, golden apple it was—a regular harvest pippin, ripe and full flavored, although it was but mid-June and the earliest apples growing roundabout still green and hard, with a sort of muddy red upon the outer She should really let a man have the cheek! Billy decided straight away that management of him. And Billy himself the counties far to the south, where, as to say nothing of the bad blood that had he had heard his grandfather say, summer came in the middle of spring. Most his Aunt Sarah, who, being a spinster, likely some one had bought it in the market town-bought, maybe, a whole dozen such beauties, and let this one slip away as he passed along the road. But that was only a trifle. How the apple happened to be there was nothing in til Sunday.

Of course Billy cught to have known vexation was sure to come with anything found upon a Friday, but the truth is he was so triumphant over his prize he never remembered the day. He could not take it to his mother and beg her to lock it safe in her bureau drawer. She would have insisted that he should nothing, I care nothing," if the disgive it to Mary Mattison, the girl who had been ill all winter and craved nothing so much as fresh fruit. Ordinarily Billy would not have grudged it to her, but only the Sunday before Peleg had walked about at church before service, holding and now and then sniffing gingerly the clove apple his grandmother had lent him in reward for learning ever so many verses of Scripture. All never yet told me a story. I don't think the other boys had looked at him with he is beginning now," grandmother a sort of awed oncy. Billy himself had begged to smell the clove apple and been contemptuously denied.

"If they made so much fuss over that old dry thing, all stuck full o' cloves, what won't they say to this beauty?" he said to himself, setting his apple upon the tip of his middle finger and eying it lovingly. He was in the back garden, just a little way from Dame Bent's house He had had a wild idea of asking her to keep his treasure. He was glad now he had not done it, for there she stood, looking over the hedge at him and scowling even worse than common. Nobody liked her, and she returned the turned with a succession of nods that misliking with interest. Some few went almost set Aunt Sarah off in a fit. so far as to say behind the hand, and very much in a whisper, that she was to melt in your mouth," Billy had be-uncanny; but, as she asked nothing of gun, when outside there arose so fine an



HE ROSE UP AND POSSESSED HIMSELF OF THE any soul and could not be shown to

have done actual harm, nothing more than talk came of it.

She lambed a dry, cackling laugh and looked hard at Billy as she said, apparently to a starling in the hedge: "Oh, but because fools! A pig would have more some." Then she went trotbeast! Sou-ee! I'll kill you! Sick her, ting off, and B lly's heart came in his

the apple, quite forgetting the Bloxham At last he hit upon what seemed the very spot for it and went running off to his mother's boundary line. A scarecrow stood on the fence betwixt her field and the Maynes'. Its coat was in shreds and tatters, but Billy knew experimentally | which scattered her assailants right and that one pocket of it was whole and sound. Into it be dropped his apple, with a long relieved sigh, then scuttered away to school, where all the morning hour he felt like laughing in everybody's face, screwing up his mouth and

saying, "Don't you wish you were me?" enough alone! But then he would not have been a boy. Of course you know that he went to see about the apple at

noon, also as soon as he was home in the afternoon, and, further, sat fondling it for half an hour as soon as it was fairly dark. And if you know anything of boy nature you need not be told that Peleg, noting the various hoverings about the scarecrow, ended by lying in watch for Billy and as soon as he was safe behind his mother's door rose up and possessed himself of the apple,

Then he hid it where, as he rightly thought, no human creature would ver look for it. And the next day, when Billy raised a hue and cry over his loss, Peleg's face of blank innocence was beautiful to see. He was too shrewd to make himself officiously foremost among the searchers. Neither did he try, as some others did, to discredit Billy's story of the find. "What for should he tell us fairy tales?" be asked judicially. "Besides, we all know harvest apples are ripe in some places. I'm going to walk the road by our house every morning now and see if I can light on one my-

Still unbelief grew. Before nightfall Billy's mother had had no less than seven tiffs with friends who called to tell her that Billy was outgrowing her. it must have been fetched from some of | had had three fights on the same count, arisen between his grandmother and believed fully that every boy was deceitful and desperately wicked. The storekeeper was Billy's friend, but the minister looked at him askance.

By 9 o'clock Sunday morning things were in train for a very lively day. comparison with the question of what Nobody thought any more of the aphe should do with it to beep it safe un- ple except as the occasion of Billy's unveracity or his despoiling. If his friends were in the minority, they made up in partisanship what they lacked in numbers. In all the Townland there was just one impartial person, Dame Bent, who had hung about the store an hour listening to all the hot discussion, but shaking her head and saying, "I know putants ventured to ask her opinion.

"He has disgraced the family. You should rise in meeting and ask prayers for him, then tomorrow beg the schoolmaster so to deal with him as to make him own to his lyine." Aunt Sarah said to his mother. 1 ing in on her way to church.

"No, you don't, Sabrina! The boy panted, dropping into a chair and taking a last pinch of snuff. "Come here, " she went on "Tell granny all about it one more time.

"It was big, a heap bigger'n both my fists," Billy began. And grand-mother nodded, "Yes." "And yellow-yellow'n gold," said

'Yes," nodded grandmother. "Sweet? Oh, my, I can smell it right now! 'Twould have gone over the meeting house in no time," Billy went on.

"Bless the boy, yes! Them Harvests do outsmell creation," grandmother re-

uproar no living boy could have helped running to see what it meant. It came from toward Dame Bent's garden, a little place, but trimly planted with garden stuff of every sort in little square plats. The fence about it was half ruined, but so far it had escaped the maraudings of the Bloxham pig. That was one thing which had given rise to the talk of magic. Then, too, though the garden was always in the highest possible tilth, you never saw a soul working

in it, not even the dame herself. Now she was running about it, her cap off, her wispy gray hair wildly fly-ing, a long broomstick in her hand and crying at the rop of her voice: "Oh, you thief, robber, murderous ingrate! You will rend my vines-my beloved cucum bers! You have ruined my best bed! My new potatoes! Out! Away with you!
May your ears be torn from your head!
May every bristle fall off your wicked back!"

But the dame's crying was as nothing to Peleg Mayne's. He came tearing out of his own yard, across the Sanders field, was over the fence and in the dame's garden before you could say Jack Robinson. At his heels was his big dog Lion, of whom any reasonably minded pig that was merely a pig should have been afraid. The Bloxham pig merely grunted a protest when Lion

Lion! Sick her!" Peleg shouted, strikthroat. He had been thinking of burying ing at the pig with a paling, he had snatched off in passing. She came out of the rooting with a bounding leap. Something round and yellow and juicy was half crunched in her jaws. Some-how she backed into a corner, bristled, gave a gnash of her long tusks, then bolted the precious morsel, made a rush

left, leaped the fence and ran away.
"So here is where you chose to hide my apple when you stole it?" Billy said, white with rage. He was ready to give Peleg the thrashing of a lifetime, but Dame Bent staid his hand. "I can give you many apples, as I gave you this,"

If he had only been content to let well she whispered low. "I will do it. You



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Beginning with the April number Mc-Clure's Magazine will bereafter be published on the first day of each month. April 1st the April number will be on sale on all news stands and delivered to all subscribers, from the Atlantic to the Pacific; and thereafter exactly on the first day of each month a new number will be published. Heretofore publication has been made on the 28th of each month; but it is believed that the change to the 1st will be to the general convenience. Among the contribators to the April number of McClure's is Will H. Low, Robert Louis Stevenson, the Hon. Henry Cabot Lodge, Hamilia Garland, Rudyard Kipling, Octave Thanet, Cy Warman, and lan Maclaren. A remarkably fine number it is, with a special Easter cover.

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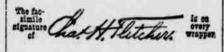
discusses "Taxation; Its Sum, Justification, and Methods," Mr. William Allen White, editor of the Emporia (Kans) Gazette, whose recent article, "What's the Matter with Kansas?" attracted such wide attention, contributes an equal powerful paper on "The Present and Future of Kansas." Mr. James Schouler, the eminent constiutional lawyer and historian, reviews those of Mr. Cleveland's administrative acts which given in our new Serial by Paul have provoked the crideism that he has arrogantly and illegally exceeded his constitutional powers, discussing in particular the lately mooted question as to the right of the Executive to recognize belligerency. Besides which there are numerous and excaedingly valuable articles.

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